

What is claimed:

1. A screening method for identifying a viral protein with an interferon-antagonizing function comprising:

5 (a) contacting a cell which expresses NS1 protein, with a virus containing a mutation that results in a decrease in activity of a viral polypeptide;

(b) identifying a mutant whose growth in the cell is enhanced by the presence of NS1 protein; and

10 (c) identifying the viral polypeptide as having an interferon antagonizing function.

2. The screening method of claim 1 wherein the virus is a paramyxovirus.

-----15 3. The screening method of claim 1 wherein the virus is a morbillivirus.

4. The screening method of claim 1 wherein the virus
20 is a pneumovirus.

5. The screening method of claim 1 wherein the virus is a rhabdovirus.

25 6. A screening method for identifying a potential antiviral agent comprising:

(a) contacting a cell that expresses (i) a reporter gene operatively linked to an interferon responsive promoter element and (ii) an interferon antagonist, with a
30 test agent, following stimulation of a cellular interferon response;

(b) monitoring a level of reporter gene product;

(c) identifying the test agent as a potential
antiviral agent when its presence results in an increase in
35 reporter gene product.

7. The screening method of claim 6, wherein the reporter gene product is green fluorescence protein (GFP).

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8. The screening method of claim 6, wherein the
interferon antagonist is NS1 protein.

9. The screening method of claim 6, wherein the
5 interferon antagonist is E3L protein.

10. The screening method of claim 6, wherein the
interferon antagonist is VP35 protein.

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